



App. No. 09/883,554
Amended Dated 01/06/2004
Reply to Office action of October 15, 2003



REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

This amendment is in response to an Office Action dated October 15, 2003. The Examiner is thanked for the thorough examination. The undersigned attorney notes that we have not received the initialed PTO/SB/08B form supplied with the Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) filed with the United States Patent and Trademark Office on November 2, 2001. Applicants enclosed herewith a copy of the November 2nd IDS.

In the Office Action, claims 10-25 were allowed. Claims 3-5, 8 and 9 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Claims 1, 2, 6, 7, 26 and 27 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102(e) and 103(a). While Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections, some of the originally filed claims have been cancelled or amended in order to place the pending claims in condition for allowance.

More specifically, objected claims 3 and 8 have been placed into independent form to include limitations of claim 1. Moreover, claims 1, 26 and 27 have been cancelled without prejudice and the dependency of claims 2, 6 and 7 have been altered. Thus, previously allowed claims 10-25 along with new independent claims 3 and 8 as well as those claims dependent thereon, are in condition for allowance. Allowance at the Examiner's earliest opportunity is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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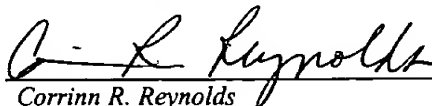
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